# Fact Sheet for MSLN/UNET Filtering Option

Many thanks to Jeff Letourneau at UNET for supplying the answers to our long list of questions regarding this product and its capabilities.

## FAQs SYNOPSIS:

MSLN-provided filtering is:

- **Free**
- **Provides for any filtered site to be unfiltered at the local level for as long as the local site wishes (From 15 minutes to forever).**
- **Requires no new hardware or software at the local site**
- **Requires only a phone call for one day activation.**

## 1. What product does UNET use for MSLN sites and how does it work?

The MSLN-provided filtering (N2H2) blocks web addresses (URLs) that fall into categories selected by N2H2.
(See http://www.n2h2.com/products/bess.php?device=categories for additional information about the categories.)  MSLN's filtering software is installed on centrally maintained and located servers and works in conjunction with MSLN's routers and caches.

## 2. Is there a charge for this filtering service?

The cost of this filtering is funded by MTEAF (the Maine Telecommunications Educational Access Fund which also funds MSLN). **There would be no charge to local libraries.**

## 3. Does the filtering software require that a library add additional software?

 There is no requirement for additional software or configurations on client computers to make use of the MSLN filtering solution.

## 4. How difficult is it to add/remove computers from filtering?

MSLN provides a web based interface for sites to manage their own filtering rules that is very easy to use.  An excellent slide presentation by Bill Lowell, "MSLN Filter Slide Show", is on MSLN's web site http://www.msln.net  under MSLN Useful Links.

An overview of setting up filtering rules can also be found under "MSLN Content Filter Management Tool" on the MSLN site.  If you want to experiment with this tool, call the MSLN Helpdesk at 1-888-367-6756 and they will configure a local setup for you


## 5. Does this filtering software block only graphics as required by CIPA?

Filtering decisions are based on URLs (not content) as defined byN2H2.  Each local school or library may select additional URLS to be blocked.  (SEE NEXT QUESTION AND ANSWER)


## 6. What are the classifications that N2H2 blocks?

See http://www.n2h2.com/products/bess.php?device=categories


## 7. Can I obtain a list of the sites that are being blocked?

N2H2 considers its master list of how sites are classified to be proprietary.  However you can check the classification of an individual site (URL) at http://database.n2h2.com.

**8.  I know that each local library can unblock sites that N2H2 is blocking.  Does a local library have to unblock an entire category or can we unblock one URL/site?**

A local library can turn a complete category on or off, or can turn a single URL on or off.  The choice is up to the local library.  If a site unblocks a URL by adding that URL to a "custom exception category", that URL will remain permanently unfiltered.  URLs can also be unfiltered for a temporary period of time.


**9.  How can library staff disable filtering on individual PCs?**

MSLN's filtering can easily be unblocked on individual computers as long as the library computers are not hidden behind a firewall. Filtering can be disabled for a library patron in a matter of seconds by entering a username and password using the filtering solution's Authorized Override feature.


**10. If my library has a firewall, what can I do to disable only one computer?**

Currently, if a site is using a firewall that is doing Network Address Translation (NAT), the Authorized Override feature should not be used as it will override the filtering rules for all computers behind the firewall.  Putting some patron computers outside the library firewall is a local option.  This of course prevents firewall security from working on that computer.


**11. Describe the Authorized Override Feature.**

The Authorized Override feature enables sites to give authorized individuals the ability to override filtering settings for a specified period of time by means of an override ID and password.  This ID and password, which is defined and maintained locally, can be entered to override the filtering rules when an end user is presented with a blocked Site page.

**12. Can anonymous requests for unblocking to be sent to library staff?**

When a user encounters a site s/he wants the library to unblock, a web-based feature on the Blocked Site page allows a request for unblocking to be sent to library staff. The user can choose to provide contact information or to remain anonymous.

**13. What appears on the computer screen when a patron tries to access a site that is blocked?  Can custom messages be displayed when a site is blocked?**

A generic "stop" message will appear on the screen; however, each MSLN site has the ability to customize what is displayed when an attempt is made to access a blocked site.

**14. How can library staff handle blocked sites?**

When a web site is blocked, the Blocked Site page presents library patrons and staff with a number of flexible options:

> **A.** Descriptive messages tells why the page was blocked
> **B.** Option to submit a request by the library to unblock the page.
> **C.** Option to temporarily bypass the filtering entirely for a set time period.
> **D.** Option to go back to previous page.

If the library staff decides that a site should not be blocked, the site can be added to a locally defined "allow list" through the web based administration interface. (https://filter.msln.net/controlcenter)

**15.  Can the patron activate option C ?**

Yes, if the library staff has provided the patron with an Authorized Override account.


**16.  If my library governance board chooses not to filter, what will it cost my library to receive ISP services from UNET, if UNET continues to be the MSLN ISP provider after July 1, 2004?**

This issue remains unresolved at this time because MSLN is in the negotiations process for new contracts and cannot provide firm prices until those contracts have been settled.  Once the contracts are settled options such as the one mentioned in this question can be determined.

**17. How do I obtain filtering and how long does it take to activate?**

Contact the MSLN help desk either at msln@maine.edu or 888-FOR-MSLN to have filtering turned on for your site.  Filtering can usually be activated the same day the request is made.


**18.  What statistics are kept and how can they be accessed? Are there standard ready-made reports?**

A minimal amount of statistics is kept for a short period of time for diagnostic and troubleshooting purposes.  Access to this information by a third party requires a subpoena.


**19. How frequently are blocked sites updated? Does the filter have the ability to dynamically block a site, even when that site has not already been placed on a blacklist?**

The standard categories provided by N2H2 are updated nightly.  Local changes go into effect immediately.